

**Lessons learned
process ensures
future operations
build on successes**

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Lessons learned process ensures future operations build on successes

“Observations, insights, and lessons do not constitute lessons learned without changing individual, unit, or Army behavior, which is accomplished through the application of the Lessons Learned Process.”

AR 11-33, Army Lessons Learned Program

By Rick San Miguel

The Signal Center of Excellence lessons learned process assures that future operations are developed out of the documented best business practices, observations, insights and lessons from unit experiences. As we field new communications systems on the landscape of continually evolving technology, capturing OILs and BBPs is essential to ensure warfighters can plan, prepare and execute future missions successfully.

The modern battlefield is no longer just about weapons platforms. It is comprised of a variety of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems that provide the warfighter with the right information to the right person at the right time (situational awareness) almost instantaneously. These systems consist of military program of record systems and commercial off the shelf technologies that advance at a rate that exceeds current POR acquisition.

These technologies are in high demand from commanders at the tactical and strategic levels to mitigate current gaps. The advancement in information technology will continue to transform military communications. There is no doubt that the military will embrace all aspects of

communications technologies to provide the warfighter with the most reliable situational awareness systems on the modern battlefield.

The Signal Center of Excellence Lessons Learned Section documents the OILs from the experiences of the Signal Soldier on the tactical edge installing, operating and maintaining cutting edge communication systems. The intent is to identify the issues and provide the Soldier with a solution, TTP or BBP as soon as possible. However, lessons learned is not just about documenting OILs from IOM communication systems, it embraces how it applies to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities.

- Doctrine – the way we fight
- Organization – how we organize to fight
- Training – how we prepare to fight tactically; basic training to advanced individual training, various types of unit training, joint exercises, etc.
- Materiel – all the “stuff” necessary to equip our forces, weapons, spares, so they can operate effectively.
- Leadership and Education – how we prepare our leaders to lead the fight from squad leader to four-star general; professional development.
- Personnel – availability of qualified people for peacetime, wartime, and various contingency operations
- Facilities – real property; installations and industrial facilities (e.g. government owned

ammunition production facilities) that support our forces.

The SLL analysts are knowledgeable in each domain to be able to identify and document the OILs during their visits to the unit during unit training events or scheduled unit umbrella weeks. OILs are documented, adjudicated and properly identified by a DOTMLPF category. Proposed solutions may involve a mixture of various categories of DOTMLPF and/or nonmaterial/materiel changes that may be considered to address capability gaps to effectively support the Warfighter. Figure 1, illustrates the codified process of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating approved LL, TTPs, and BBPs.

Signal Lessons Learned Process

The Signal Lessons Learned analysts collect, analyze, archive, and disseminate OILs, TTPs, and BBPs based on observations and lessons from actual military operations, training events, experiments, and initiatives. The following locations, websites, and forums outline where SLL analysts collect their Signal OILs.

Collect

Joint Readiness Training Center

The JRTC is one of the three CTCs that conduct tough, realistic, multi-echelon, joint and combined arms training to train leaders to deal with complex situations; to create flexible, skilled Soldiers; and

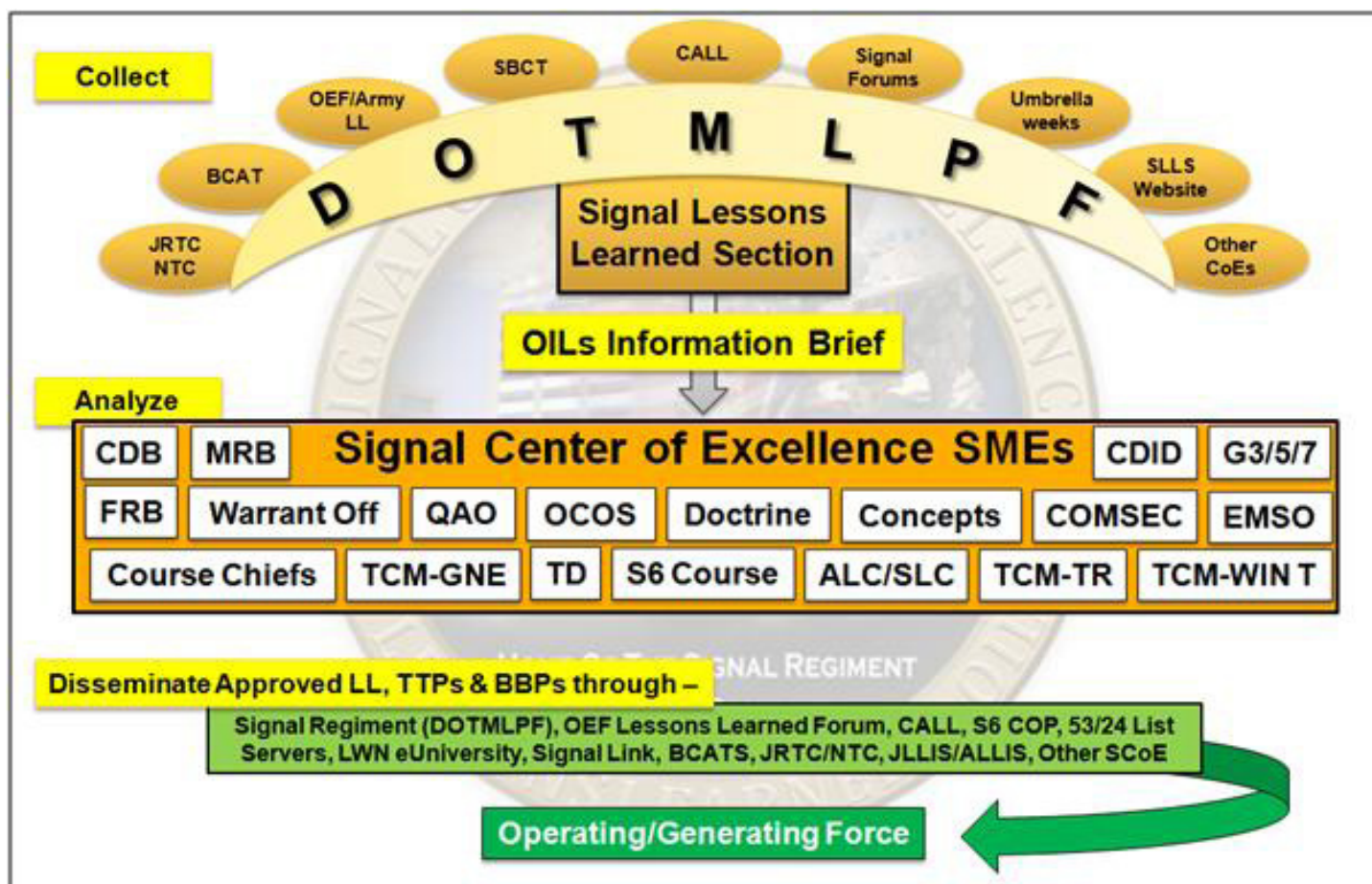


Figure 1. Collect – Analyze – Disseminate Codified Process Flow

develop highly proficient, cohesive units capable of conducting operations across the full spectrum of conflict. Training rotations are focused on the contemporary operational environment and counterinsurgency operations. <http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/OPS/index.html> The SLL analyst coordinates with the JRTC trainer/mentor and schedules visits during a unit's rotation in preparation for their upcoming deployments. The SLL analyst attends the units After Action Reviews (ARRs documents and discusses OILs with the S6 and Signal Soldiers.

National Training Center

Fort Irwin is the national training center for the Army. NTC provides tough, realistic, joint and combined arms training in interagency, intergovernmental and multinational venues across the spectrum of conflict in order to

prepare brigade combat teams and other units for combat. The SLL analyst coordinates with the NTC TM and schedules visits during a unit's rotation in preparation for their upcoming deployments. The SLL analyst attends the units After Action Reviews (ARRs documents and discusses OILs with the S6 and Signal Soldiers.

Joint Multinational Readiness Center

JMRC located in Hohenfels, Germany is flexible, adaptable and dual mission capable. From individuals to small units to brigade combat teams, JMRC trains Soldiers, joint forces and multinational partners. As the premier location executing Afghanistan pre-deployment and multinational training, coupled with our exportable training capabilities, the JMRC is leading the Army in training

transformation and preparing for the future. While the SSL has not participated in a unit's rotation at JMRC the process is set. An SSL would coordinate with the NTC TM and schedule visits during a unit's rotation in preparation for their upcoming deployments. The SLL analyst attends the unit's after action reviews (ARRs documents and discusses OILs with the S6 and Signal Soldiers.

Signal Support Teams/Battle Command Assistance Teams

Training a unit's Signal Soldiers to be the trainers, while simultaneously ensuring the unit's S6 section has the requisite skills, abilities and knowledge to guarantee mission success across the formation, is what FORSCOM's specialized, mobile training teams are all about. These teams, called

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Signal support teams, first fielded in 2009, are staffed with Signal professionals who understand the challenges faced by other Army communication professionals at all levels.

Army Lessons Learned Forum

The Army Lessons Learned (formerly Operation Enduring Freedom) forum was established to resolve issues and accelerate rapid adaptation of OILs, TTPs, and BBPs across DOTMLPF through the levels of war and between the operating and generating forces to enable continuous improvement of Army forces in support of OEF. The SLL analyst participates in the Action Officer that receives, reviews topics/issues, development of remedial action plans

Stryker Brigade Combat Team Umbrella Weeks

A team of representatives from TRADOC, the Stryker Warfighter's Forum, Program Manager Stryker Brigade Combat Team and other participating agencies led by the TRADOC capability manager, Stryker brigade combat team, conduct a series of structured interviews and survey sessions with leaders and Soldiers recently returning from their deployments. The 4-day conference is conducted in order to collect observations, insights, data and lessons learned for analysis and incorporation into ongoing revisions of field manuals, materiel programs/systems and various training and leader development programs of instruction. Discuss leader and Soldier experiences to gain insights and collect data covering all aspects of DOTMLPF as it relates to the planning, preparation and execution of operations and to rapidly pass critical lessons to TRADOC COEs and other SBCTs preparing for future deployments.

Unit Umbrella Weeks

The Signal Lessons Learned Section participates in unit umbrella weeks being hosted by the unit recently returning from OIF/OEF.

Center for Army Lessons Learned

The Center for Army Lessons Learned rapidly collects, analyzes, disseminates, and archives OILs, TTPs and operational records in order to facilitate rapid adaptation initiatives and conduct focused knowledge sharing and transfer that informs the Army and enables operationally based decision making, integration, and innovation throughout the Army and within the JJIM environment. Open the CALL Web site <http://call.army.mil>. Individuals requiring additional information, articles, publications, or research material may request them at the CALL RFI site, located at this address: <https://call-rfi.leavenworth.army.mil/rfisystem>

of Purpose, Spectrum forums to capture and document OILs, TTPs and BBPs.

Signal Lessons Learned Section Website

The SLLS website is located at <https://lwn.army.mil> hosted by LandWarNet eUniversity. It is the Signal Soldier point of contact at the Signal Center of Excellence pertaining to unit OILs, TTPs, and/or BBPs. Documented OILs from units visited by the SLL analysts are posted on the website. The SLLS also administers/monitors a variety of forums for users to query specific OILs, TTPs, BBPs or other request for information. Objective: To rapidly resolve OILs and disseminate TTPs and BBPs to the Signal Regiment.

Other Centers of Excellence

Coordination with the other CoE's to document the Signal concerns they encounter during their unit collections.

Signal Forums

Monitor Signal Forums on LWN eUniversity, S6 Community

Analyze

Subject Matter Experts
SME's from the Signal Center

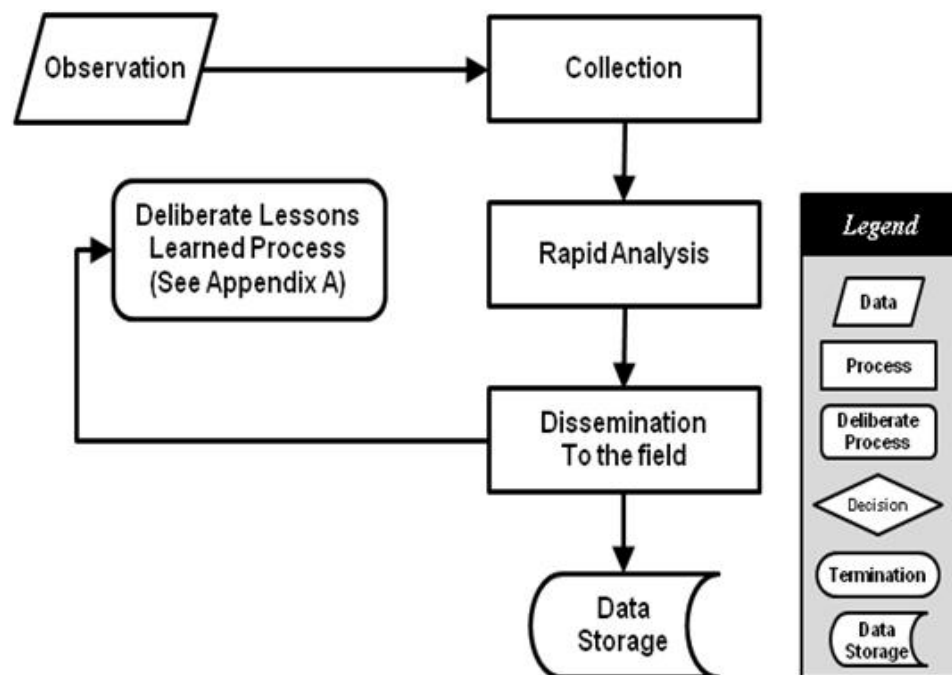


Figure 2. Rapid Lessons Learned Process, AR 11-33

and the school house have the opportunity to review and provide comments to the documented unit OILs, TTPs and or BBPs from units returning back from deployment (unit umbrella weeks) or from unit rotations at JRTC/NTC in preparation for deployment, (See Figure 1, Collect – Analyze – Disseminate Codified Process.) By analyzing the OILs the Signal Regiment determines how to sustain, enhance, and increase its preparedness for future operations, or provide a materiel or non materiel solution. The SLL analyst contacts/coordinates with the SME's based on DOTMLPF to discuss, coordinate and resolve the OILs so they can be rapidly disseminated back to the Warfighter. The proponent validates the OILs, TTPs and BBPs pertaining to their domain and develops the DOTMLPF solutions effecting change immediately and accurately. In the event an OIL, TTP or BBP affects other branches or functions; such as, a critical safety issue, the SIGCoE commanding general is notified and the OIL is forward to CAC and TRADOC so they can take charge of the issue, assign lead and supporting agents, and organize the efforts of the various branch proponents that may be affected.

Disseminate

Recommended OILs are disseminated through Signal Regiment, Army (formerly OEF) Lessons Learned Forums, Center for Army Lessons Learned, S6 Community of Purpose, 53/24 List Servers, LWN eUniversity, Signal Link, FORSCOM, combat training centers, Joint Lessons Learned Information System and other centers of excellence. If applicable updates are made to doctrine, training, and force design (materiel, organization, and personnel).

Signal Lessons Learned



Figure 3. Signal Lessons Learned website homepage is a representation of the homepage of the Signal Lessons Learned website hosted by LandWarNet eUniversity, <https://lwn.army.mil>.

Process

“We are not here to evaluate you, but for you to evaluate how well we have trained and equipped you to accomplish your mission.”

“The lessons learned process is a deliberate and systematic process for collecting and analyzing field data and disseminating, integrating, and archiving observations, insights, and lessons collected from Army operations and training events. Information gathering will be integrated into DOTMLPF, research (industry and academia), development, acquisition, and planning activities in order to sustain, enhance, and increase the Army's preparedness to conduct current and future

operations. The process is solution-oriented. It is designed to support organizations at all levels of command and staff and can be adapted for use in all operations, to include combat, training, maintenance, installation support, experiments, and equipment fielding.” AR 11-33, Army Lessons Learned Program.

I quoted the LLP directly from AR 11-33, because it clearly articulates the LL process from being a deliberate and systematic act of collecting OILs to improve the Army's overall effectiveness in each DOTMLPF domain. The SIGCoE Lessons Learned Process was developed with the same continuity as the Army LLP, using:

- AR 11-33, Army Signal Lessons

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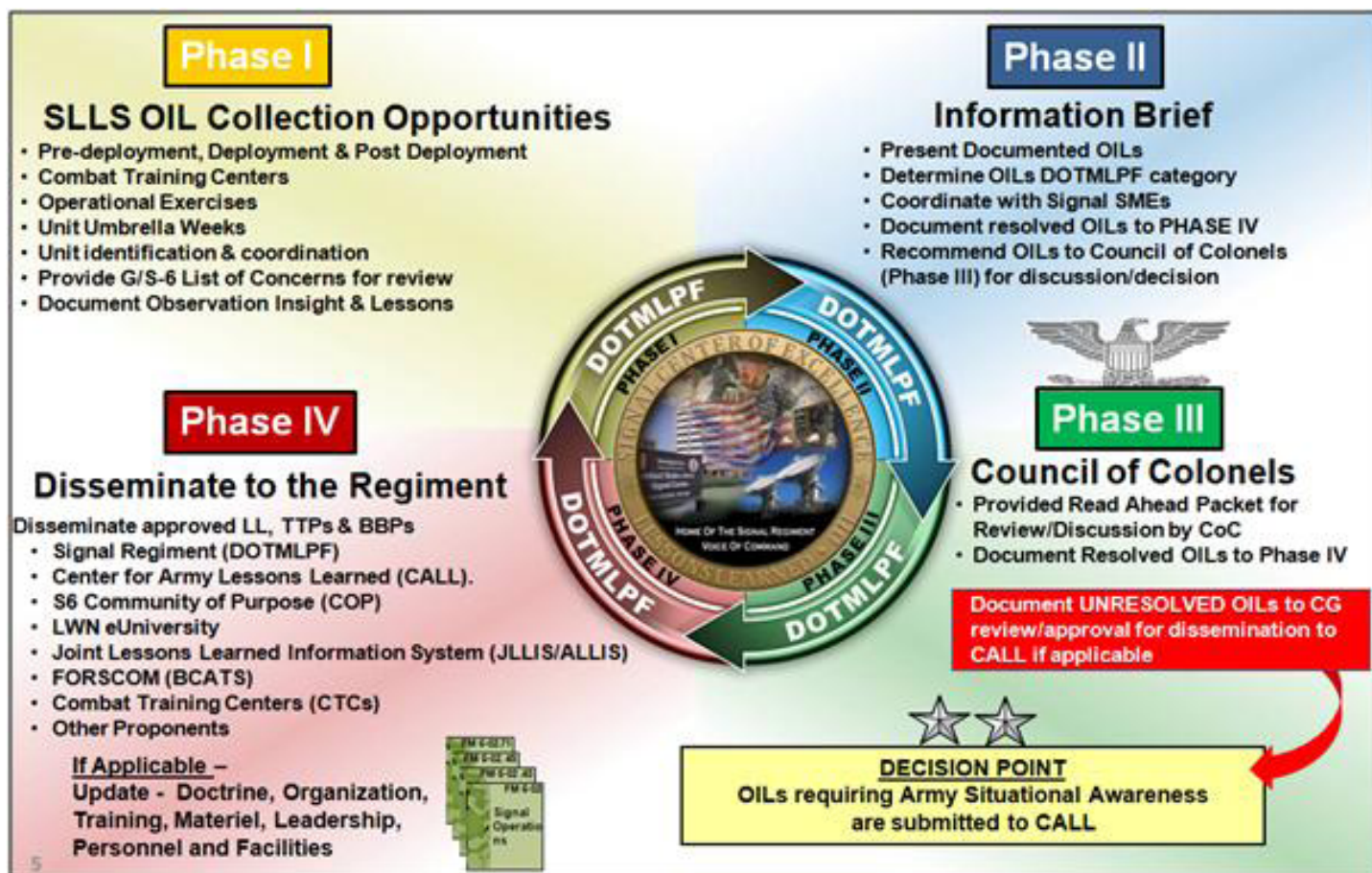


Figure 4. SIGCoE Lessons Learned Four Phase Process

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Learned Process

- Center for Army Lessons Learned
- Joint Lessons Learned Information System
- TRADOC Capabilities Manager-Stryker Lessons Learned Program
- Other Center of Excellence Lessons Learned Programs

Note: The Signal Lessons Learned Process does not replace, AR 11-33, Army LLP.

The SIGCoE SLLS developed a four phase process which is very similar to the rapid lessons learned process depicted in figure 4-2, of AR 11-33, ALLP (see Figure 2) being used to document DOTMLPF OILs that directly impact the Signal Regiment.

The Signal Lessons Learned Four Phase Process as depicted

in Figure 4 (above) is very similar to the rapid lessons learned process: Collection and Observation – Phase 1, SLLS OIL Collection Opportunities; Rapid Analysis – Phase 2, SLL Advisory Board; Dissemination to the Field – Phase 4, Dissemination to the Regiment; Data Storage – The Signal Lessons Learned Website <https://lwn.army.mil>. In addition, the Signal Lessons Learned Process added an additional step, Phase 3 that includes a Council of Colonels for issues that require leadership approval that may affect the Army or various branch proponents. The Signal Lessons Learned Four Phase Process is described below:

Phase I **SLLS OIL Collection Opportunities**

The SLL analyst coordinates

with the unit, combat training center's (joint readiness training center) and the national training center] or is contacted to attend an umbrella week from a unit that has recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom. The SLL analyst coordinates with the unit by an initial visit, teleconference, and/or VTC. The purpose is to establish contact, coordinate dates and develop a rapport with the unit S6, Signal Company Commander, and Signal Soldiers. A list of concerns/questions, derived from trend analysis or DOTMLPF SME input, is provided for the unit to review as an aid to facilitate discussions.

Phase II **Advisory Board**

The purpose of the advisory board is to provide the SIGCoE

subject matter experts an opportunity to listen to what Signal Soldiers have shared based on experiences and to review/ discuss recently documented OILs. In some cases the unit will send representatives to Fort Gordon to participate directly in the advisory board, other times they teleconference during the board. As a last resort the SLL analyst presents the unit's concerns/issues to the advisory board.

During the board, OILs are determined to either affect the Signal Regiment or are unit/theater specific to the mission. If the OIL is determined to be unit/theater specific, they are cataloged by DOTMLPF. If the OIL is determined to affect the Army/Signal Regiment the SLL analyst will coordinate with the SIGCoE SMEs to achieve the best possible solution/recommendation.

The results of the OILs are presented during the next Advisory Board and published on the SLL Website. Any OILs that cannot be resolved are recommended to a Council of Colonels (Phase III). Documented resolved OILs as LL, TTPs and BBPs are recommended for Dissemination (Phase IV).

Phase III

Council of Colonels

The CoC is chaired by the CDID Directorate to review/ discuss recommended OILs from Phase II of the SLL Process. Resolved OILs are recommended for dissemination as a LL, TTP or BBP. Unresolved OILs are recommended for the commanding general, Chief of Signal's review and recommendation.

Phase IV

Disseminate to the Regiment

OILs that have been recommend for dissemination are disseminated through the following: Signal Regiment, Army (formerly OEF) Lessons Learned Forum, Center for Army Lessons Learned, S6 Community of Purpose, 53/24 List Servers, LWN eUniversity, Signal Link, FORSCOM, combat training centers, Joint Lessons Learned Information System, other centers of excellence. If applicable update doctrine, training, and force design (materiel, organization, and personnel). The Signal lessons learned advisory boards are held the first Tuesday of each month.

Documenting OILs is of vital importance to improve and update doctrine for current and future deployments, organizational force structure, training methods, materiel and non materiel solutions, leadership and educational skills, Signal personnel assignments, and tactical and strategic facilities. The SLLS will document unit OILs capturing relevant LL, TTPs, BBPs and accelerate them across the operating and generating forces to enable continuous improvement of the Signal Regiment.

Rick San Miguel is a Department of the Army civilian and presently holds the position of the Signal Lessons Learned coordinator / doctrine writer, G3/5/7, U.S. Army Signal Center of Excellence, Fort Gordon. His background spans 36 years of service to the Signal Regiment.

Join the Discussion
<https://signallink.army.mil>



ACRONYM QuickScan

AAR - After Action Reviews
ALLIS - Army Lessons Learned Information System
AR - Army Regulation
ALLP - Army Signal Lessons Learned Process
BCAT - Battle Command Assistance Teams
BBP - Best Business Practices
CALL - Center for Army Lessons Learned
CoE - Centers of Excellence
C4ISR - Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
CAC - Combined Arms Command
CG - Commanding General
COTS - Commercial off the shelf
CAC - Common Access Card

COP - Community of Purpose
COC - Council of Colonels
CBT - Computer Based Training
DOTMLPF - Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities
FORSCOM - Forces Command
GOSC - General Officer Steering Committee
IOM - Installing, operating and maintaining
JLLIS - Joint Lessons Learned Information System
JRTC - Joint Readiness Training Center
LWN - LandWarNet
LL - Lessons Learned
LLP - Lessons Learned Process
NTC - National Training Center
OILs - Observations, insights, and

lessons
OEF - Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF - Operation Iraqi Freedom
POR - Program of record
SIGCoE - Signal Center of Excellence
SSL - Signal Lessons Learned
SLLS - Signal Lessons Learned Section
S6 - Signal Officer
SST - Signal Support Teams
SBCT - Stryker Brigade Combat Team
SME - Subject Matter Expert
TTP - Tactics, techniques and procedures
TM - Trainer/Mentor
UM - Umbrella week
VTC - Video Teleconference